The End of the Republic – Reading and Homework

Nomen:

Spatium:

Instructions: Read about the final years of the Republic. After reading, answer the questions.

**The problems that led to the fall of the Roman Republic (From Mr. Donn)**

The Roman Republic was in trouble.  It had three major problems.

1.  Rome needed money to run.

The Republic needed money to pay the legions (military), to build roads, sewers, aqueducts, and arenas, and to pay for the welfare programs that fed the poor.  To get this money Rome created a system called tax farmers.

A tax farmer was a person who bought the right from the Senate to tax all the people and business in a certain area.  The biggest problem with this system is that the senate didn't set up any controls on the tax farmers.  They didn't say how much taxes were, or who got taxed.  They left all that up to the tax farmer.

Tax farming was a business, and the tax farmers were in it to make a profit.  While most Romans were willing to pay taxes, and even allow the tax farmer some profit, many of the tax farmers went way beyond what people expected.  Many of them saw this as a way to get rich.  Plus, since the tax farmer decided who got taxed and who didn't, you could bribe the tax farmer to make your taxes low or maybe tax your competitors out of business, or if you had enough bribe money, maybe both.  If a Roman citizen didn't pay their taxes at whatever amount the tax farmer set, you and your entire family could be sold into slavery.

Even with the tax farmer system, the Roman government wasn't getting enough money and Rome was going broke.

2.  Elected officials were corrupt.

Under Roman law you could pay someone to vote for you.  So rich people could actually buy their way into the Senate.  Once in the Senate, there were many ways to get huge amounts of money.  Remember the tax farmer?  Since they bought the position from the Senate, the Senate set the amount it cost and decided who actually got the job.  Plus, the Senate decided who got to build the roads, arenas, etc.  So construction companies bribed the Senate to get the construction contracts.  Finally, since the Senate made all the laws, people could bribe senators to make laws that they wanted.  The government of the Republic was rife with corruption.

3.  Rome was riddled with crime.

Criminals ran wild in Rome.  Since there was no police force, there was no one to stop them.  It was not safe to walk the streets without a guard.  Wealthy Romans hired guards and even built their own small armies to protect their homes and families.  This led to further problems when the guards of one wealthy family fought the guards of another family over insults or business territories.  The Senate couldn't do anything since there was no money to hire police or even create a militia.

There were other problems in Rome to add to these.  Senators didn't trust each other, and they really didn't trust the legions.  They even passed laws making it illegal for a legion to enter Rome.  Rome was a disaster. The people of Rome were tired of the mess and wanted the problems solved and the corruption ended.  Julius Caesar told the people of Rome that he could solve all of Rome's problems.

4. Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar was such a famous and important leader in ancient Rome that they named a month after him - July, for Julius Caesar.  Julius Caesar was an able administrator and a famous general.  He wrote new laws and changed and improved how to rule provinces of the empire.

The Roman Republic was in trouble.  Rome was overrun with crime and people were afraid to go out into the streets.  People were out of work and taxes had gone up again.  The Romans were angry with their government and were demanding the government do something.  Caesar spoke to the people and told them he knew what to do.  The Roman citizens believed and trusted him.  They wanted him to fix the problems of Rome.

As Caesar gained power through the support of the people, the rest of the Senate became worried.  Caesar might make himself King.  And the senate swore that they would never be ruled by a king again.

Caesar was becoming impatient with the Senate.  He had his own army. Even though it was against the law for anyone to bring their private army into the city of Rome, he did just that.  The people cheered.  They were saved.  Caesar was going to solve all the problems of Rome.  The Senate plotted.

Questions based on the reading:

1. What was a tax farmer?
2. What were the three major problems for Rome at the end of the Republic?
3. What did the Roman people think of Julius Caesar?
4. What did the Senators think of Julius Caesar?
5. Why did they have different opinions?
6. Imagine you are a Roman citizen. You find out Julius Caesar has just been assassinated. What do you think will happen next? What would you want to happen next?